



[Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804](#)

Consciousness

Our first two parts of our ten-part Hegel series are behind us. Starting now, and for the next five parts, we are going to track Andy Blunden's prepared course of lectures on Hegel.

But rather than leading with Andy's writings, we will take excerpts from Hegel that have been chosen by Andy, compile them together, and treat them as our main discussion text. This will be in keeping with our long-time Communist University way of doing things, whereby we privilege the original writings of our subject, and discuss them. We will mostly take Andy's good texts as further, additional, optional or alternative reading.

Today's main discussion texts are two, linked below.

The **first** consists of five short quotations from Hegel and one from Immanuel Kant. More light may be cast upon them below, and in Andy Blunden's writings, to follow.

Kant

As much as the world that Marx entered was a Hegelian world, so just as much was the world that Hegel was born into, in 1770, a Kantian one. Kant was then approaching fifty, and Kant was still going strong when Hegel published his first attempt to create a concrete and comprehensive philosophical system, the [System of Ethical Life](#) (1802).

Kant lived a long, respectable and orderly life in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia), the capital of the major German power of his time, Prussia. Kant said that things (phenomena) cannot be known. The "thing-in-itself" (*ding-an-sich*) is unknowable, according to Kant. Having evaded the basic question of philosophy in this way (i.e. the relationship of mind to matter), Kant freed himself to improvise an elaborate *ad hoc* bourgeois moral code, and he thereby achieved an unparalleled authority in his lifetime.

Hegel was different. Hegel said, in effect: Yes, things cannot altogether be known. But what we see is what we can know, and what we are able to see and to know is what we are, as humans. What we are able to see and to know is also something that develops. The way that it develops can be known, and is in fact dialectical.

In this way, Hegel rescued humanism from the arbitrariness,

and the eclecticism, of the eighteenth-century encyclopaedists (e.g. **Diderot**), the romantics (e.g. **Rousseau**), the empiricists (e.g. **Hume**) and the so-called idealists such as Kant. We can argue about what Hegel meant by “Spirit” and “Idea” later, but what we can note here is the nature of the undoubted movement from Kant via Hegel to Marx.

Hegel restored the relationship of Subject and Object as it had been understood by [Spinoza](#) and the earlier rational humanists, but now rooted it in a *systematic* and especially a *dynamic* understanding, so that it could eventually become, in Marx’s hands, a full theory of change, and therefore a revolutionary theory.

The Master-Slave relationship

The **second** main downloadable linked text today is the famous [Master-Slave passage](#) from Hegel’s “Phenomenology”, which we must read, if only so as to discount it and put it aside.

We have already cautioned ourselves about this passage, which in the 20th century, in the hands of Alexandre Kojève, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, took on a populist life of its own as a reversion to anti-humanist static relationships and the vulgar reification of “The Other”, which is what we have called [“The Fake Other”](#).

For the purposes of this course we are from now on going to proceed, as directed by [Lenin](#), to comprehend Hegel’s “Logic” as best we can, so as the better to understand Marx’s

“Capital”. In this matter we are guided by Andy Blunden, who says:

*“Some interpretations of Hegel take as their point of departure the master-servant relation, §§178-196 of the Phenomenology. Very broadly speaking, those Hegelians who take this relation as their essential Hegel and those who take the Logic as their essential Hegel form two almost mutually exclusive schools of thought. **What is special about the master-servant relation is that it is an apparently unmediated relation lacking any third point to mediate the relation.** On the other hand, the Logic, along with the entirety of Hegel’s works, is all about mediation. **It is really impossible to read the Logic from the standpoint of unmediated relations, and in fact, outside of that one passage of about 19 paragraphs, it is impossible to read any of Hegel’s work without making central the relation of mediation.** And in any case, the master-servant relation is about how two subjects still somehow manage to mediate their relation even when there is no third party or common language or law to mediate the relation for them.”*

The Master-Slave relation is an interesting metaphor and a small part of Hegel, but it is not the whole or principal Hegel.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Young Hegel excerpts, Phenomenology, Consciousness and Kant](#) and [The Master-Servant Relation from Hegel’s ‘Phenomenology’](#).
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